

Timeline

The development of an accurate timeline requires a multiple of sources including: dispatch logs; radio transmission voiceprints; individual statements; and interviews. In some situations, time estimations were necessary because personal observations and radio transmissions were made without a time record/reference or source time references conflicted. When a specific time could not be determined, a best estimate of time was provided. Events that occurred some time between established time references are indicated by asterisks (*).

October 26, 2006 – All times are listed as Pacific Daylight Time

1:11 a.m.

- Vegetation fire reported in the vicinity of Elm Street and Bonita Avenue in Cabazon, California

1:18 a.m.

- Initial Attack Incident Commander (Riverside County Medic Engine 24) provides initial size-up and estimates fire at two acres located on the hillside

1:24 a.m.

- CAL FIRE Battalion Chief estimates the fire at 10 acres with a rapid rate of spread and possibly burning into the San Bernardino National Forest (BDF) land
- Request for five single resource Type III engines sent to BDF as an immediate need

1:32 a.m.

- CAL FIRE Battalion Chief 3113 assumes Incident Commander (IC) role
- Fire is spotting 500 feet ahead of itself
- Five acre spot is reported

1:43 a.m.

- BDF dispatch requests Forest Service Fire Engines 51, 52, 54, 56, and 57 to respond to the fire

1:44 a.m.

- Fire is estimated at 75 acres with a rapid rate of spread

1:53 a.m.

- Structure threat in Twin Pines area is reported
- Additional firefighting resources are requested

3:07 a.m.

- CAL FIRE Division Chief 3106 assumes Incident Commander (IC) role
- Fire is approximately 500 acres and has burned up and over Cabazon Peak

4:00 a.m.

- Evacuation of Twin Pines area ordered by Esperanza Incident Commander

4:02 a.m.

- Forest Service Engines 51, 52, 54, 56 and 57 arrive at the Incident Command Post (ICP) in Cabazon
- Initial briefing takes place at ICP
(*Witness Statements # 11.6; 12.4; 13.1; and 16*)

4:18 a.m.

- Forest Service Engines 51, 52, 54, 56, and 57 are en route to the staging area at Twin Pines Road and Highway 243
(*Witness Statements #11.6; 12.4; 13.1; and 16*)

4:19 a.m.

- Engine 51 reports new fire start along Interstate 10 and is diverted to suppress the fire
- Engines 52, 54, 56, and 57 continue traveling to the staging area at the junction of Twin Pines Road and Highway 243

* Residents are evacuating Twin Pines area. The road is congested with vehicles and motor homes

4:50 a.m.

- Engines 52, 54, 56 and 57 arrive at the staging area and are assigned to drive down on Wonderview Road to triage and assist with evacuations

5:15 a.m.

- Engines 52 and 57 begin traveling down Wonderview Road
(*Witness Statement # U12.4*)

* Engines 54 and 56 are loading up and programming radios. They are advised by the Structure Protection Group Supervisor (CAL FIRE Battalion Chief 3114) to wait on Twin Pines Road for March Air Force Base - Brush 10 Fire Engine (MB-10)
(*Witness Statements #13.1 and 16*)

5:16 a.m.

- Engine 51 is released from the fire along Interstate 10 and proceeds to the staging area

* Engines 52 and 57 continue to travel down Wonderview Road
(*Witness Statement #12.4*)

5:30 a.m.

- Engine 52 turns into the driveway at 16600 Wonderview Road and encounters a resident who refuses to leave. Engine 52 remains to assist in evacuation.

* Engine 57 then continues to alone travel down Wonderview Road and stopped at a house under construction at the junction of 49550 Venison Road (Tile House). Engine 57 Captain sized-up the Tile House and the rest of Venison Road then turned around and continued traveling down Wonderview Road. He then radioed Engine 52 Captain and advised that the Tile House had “room enough for two engines,” and that he would continue on down and look for other buildings.
(*Witness Statement #12.4*)

5:40 a.m.

- Engines 54, 56, and MB-10 leave the staging area to travel down Wonderview Road. The road is cut off by the fire, so the engines turn around and drive back up to Twin Pines Road.
(*Witness Statements #11.6, 13.1, and 15.1*)

5:44 a.m.

- Branch II arrives at Engine 52’s location and directs Engine 52 to remain in place until the resident at 16600 Wonderview Road is evacuated

5:45 a.m.

- Evacuation of resident at 16600 Wonderview Road is completed

* Engine 52 resumes travel down Wonderview Road and arrives at 49550 Venison Drive (Tile House) and prepares for structure protection

5:53 a.m.

- Engines 54, 56, and MB-10 meet with Engine 51 on Twin Pines Road and begin traveling down Gorgonio View Road together
(*Witness Statements #13.1, 15.1, and 16*)

6:00 a.m.

*Engine 57 arrives at 15400 Gorgonio View Road (Octagon House)
(*Witness Statement #12.4*)

6:15 a.m. – 6:20 a.m.

- Engines 51, 54, 56, and MB-10 continue down Gorgonio View Road and can see the main fire
(*Witness Statements #11.6; 13.1; 15.1; and 16*)
- Branch II meets with Engines 51, 54, 56, and MB-10

6:20 a.m. – 6:30 a.m.

- Branch II meets with Engine 57 Captain at the Octagon House
(*Witness Statement #U-6*)

*Engines 51, 54, 56 and MB-10 arrive at 15975 Gorgonio View Drive (Doublewide) and begin structure protection measures and prepare for a burnout operation to create a safety zone
(*Witness Statement #U11.6*)

6:30 a.m.

- Branch II stops back at the Doublewide on his way back up to Twin Pines Road and informs Engines 51, 54, 56, and MB-10 of Engine 57's location
(*Witness Statements #U-6 and U-11.6*)

6:40 a.m.

- Branch II advises that the fire has crossed Twin Pines Road and “fire behavior is extreme”
- The fire makes a second run by Engine 52 at the Tile House

6:45 a.m.

- Branch II meets with Twin Pines Structure Protection Group Supervisor on Twin Pines Road to discuss plan

* Engine 52 Captain contacts Engine 56 Captain via radio on a Forest Service tactical radio frequency not assigned to the fire and advises that the fire is “boiling up at the bottom down below”

(Witness Statement # U12.4 and 16)

* Engine 57 Captain contacts Engine 51 Captain and recommends they “begin firing now”

(Witness Statements #U11.6 and U-19)

*Engines 51, 54, 56, and MB-10 implement burnout just prior to fire front hitting

7:00 a.m.

- Intense holding action of burnout operation with spotting from the fire

7:04 a.m.

- Air Attack arrives over the fire

7:10 a.m.

- Winds increase
- Significant smoke is present
- Visibility impairment is five to 10 feet

7:15 a.m.

- All personnel at the Doublewide take refuge in Engines
(Witness Statement #U-11.6)
- Radio calls from Engine 52 to Engine 57 go unanswered
(Witness Statements #U11.6 and U16)

7:57 a.m.

- Engine 51 and 52 Captains access the driveway of the Octagon House and they find one seriously burned firefighter
(*Witness Statement # U-16*)
- Engine 52 Captain contacts BDF and reports the burnover incident. He informs Federal Interagency Communications Center (FICC) that there are two firefighters with severe injuries and three firefighters are missing
- Incident Commander (Division Chief 3106) hears notification of burn victims through the Forest Net Radio channel [a station radio system already in place at the Cabazon Fire Station]
(*Witness Statement #U-7*)

7:58 a.m.

- Engine 52 Captain requests two ambulances

7:59 a.m.

- Engine 52 Captain increases request to four ambulances

8:00 a.m.

- Two surviving victims receive initial medical treatment from the on-scene firefighters
(*Witness Statement #U-11.6*)

8:04 a.m.

- Three deceased firefighters are found
- Engine 54 Captain requests a coroner

8:22 a.m.

- CAL FIRE Helicopter 301 lands at the accident site and the first burned firefighter is loaded and transported to the Arrowhead Regional Burn Center
(*Witness Statement #U-8*)

8:35 a.m.

- CAL FIRE Helicopter 305 transports the second burned firefighter to the Arrowhead Regional Burn Center
(*Witness Statement #U-8*)

9:09 a.m.

- CAL FIRE Helicopter 301 lands at Arrowhead Regional Burn Center
(*Witness Statement #U-18*)

7:09 p.m.

- The bodies of the three deceased firefighters are removed from the accident site